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Exodus 40 - Redemption

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: Exodus 40.

We have in this book of Exodus, in a very comprehensive and yet crystallised form, the setting forth in the form of a mystery - that is, by means of types and symbols and parables - of the eternal thoughts and counsels of God.

We must not look upon the Old Testament as something that has been - long centuries ago, some history, something to do with the Jews, with Israel, and something out of which, of course, we draw lessons for our own lives now day by day. If we dismiss it like that, we miss the whole object, and it can only be of very limited value. We must realise that the thoughts of God are eternal thoughts, and that they do not just apply to one time. They come out from eternity, they go through time, and they go into eternity. And those thoughts are governing and shaping the whole course of history and are intended to be fully realised, and manifested in their realised form in the ages to come. The counsels of God, as Paul speaks of them, from before the foundation of the world, are now being wrought out: "Who works all things after the counsel of His will". Those counsels are being wrought out now, and those counsels are going to be consummated and displayed, again, as Paul says, in the ages to come. So that in the book of Exodus we have eternal counsels, eternal thoughts expressed in the form of what Paul calls "mystery". That is, unclosed secret things, hidden from perception. The real meaning is not perceived in the Old Testament, but the meaning is there.

We must recognise that when Paul says the thing was not made known in other generations, he does not mean that it was not there. It was there, it is there everywhere, but not recognised. Our knowledge of it now is because we have the illumination of the whole by the Holy Spirit, and so all ages and all dispensations break open into light with their full content and meaning in the

dispensation which is the chief dispensation of all, and that is the one in which we live; the dispensation of the Holy Spirit for revealing the full purposes of God.

Here are the counsels and thoughts of God which are eternal, being set forth in this way by means of types and symbols and parables in the meaning of the word "the mystery", a hidden thing.

These thoughts and counsels from eternity have a twofold connection: firstly, all-inclusively, primarily concerning God's Son, Jesus Christ, whom He appointed Heir of all things; and secondly concerning His church. Those two things are brought out very clearly and very definitely in this book of Exodus.

Now, if we wanted a very concrete and yet very comprehensive fragment of New Testament Scripture to cover all that, we have it in Ephesians 1:17-19. It covers everything:

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (*here you have that which is necessary to disclose the mystery, the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*); having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe."

We can leave it there, although the whole of this letter, bit by bit, is an unfolding, a revelation of what we have in mystery in the book of Exodus. It is Christ and His church, and their place in the eternal counsels of God.

Recognising the object of the book, and that we, in this dispensation more than people in any other dispensation that has gone, are bound up with this revelation, we today are in the book of Exodus, in its eternal and essential meaning and value. Israel was in the book of Exodus in a temporal, earthly way. We are in it in an eternal way, and all that is here affects us in a way in which it has never affected a people before, carrying us out into a realm and range of things far beyond anything else in the history of this world. And what is here so applies to us that in the ages to come all the Divine thought lying behind this book is to be manifested and expressed in us, in the church which is the chief object of the Lord's activity in this dispensation. Seeing that, we can break up the unfolding of these thoughts of God into its main movements.

Redemption in Christ Jesus

The first, of course, is the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. You deal with the whole thing from the two sides:

(1) Redemption from the World and the Kingdom of Satan

First of all you see Christ, Christ redeeming and Christ the Redeemer. You see the means and method of His redemptive activity, redeeming by His Blood, redeeming by His death and resurrection. You see the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And then you see the church in type, in figure, redeemed; the Lord's people, the chosen people, the elect, redeemed. Firstly, redeemed from Egypt, that is, from the world as a kingdom of darkness and a kingdom of Satan. That redemption was individual and corporate. Every man had to take a lamb. It had to be of individual appropriation and application, but inasmuch as a nation was concerned through the individual act, it became a corporate thing, so that the ultimate effect and result is a church *out*.

We must not lose the individual place in the light of the church, and we must not lose the light of the church by becoming merely individualistic. We must remember that salvation, while it is an individual appropriation, in God's full thought is corporate; that is, salvation is related to a whole Body, the church, and no individual as an individual can come into God's full purpose. That is why two men who wholly followed the Lord, and on their own ground might well have gone into possession of the land, Joshua and Caleb, had to go back and wait for the rest. They had to get back into the wilderness while that whole generation died, and God had a new church, and they went in with the church. They could not inherit alone because God's thought is the church inheriting and not individuals as such. You must have the whole church in. It is individual in appropriation but it is corporate in God's full intention. That is one side of redemption; it is redemption *from*.

(2) Redemption unto God

The other side is redemption *unto* God. The song of the redeemed in the book of the Revelation is, "...and has redeemed us unto God". And so you find that when these people are redeemed from the world, then they are hallowed, and they are hallowed by the feast of unleavened bread. And unleavened bread means the setting aside of the whole life of nature, the ferment of the natural life, the flesh, with all natural desires, natural interests, all fleshly concerns, all that belongs to the old creation. That is the leaven which is eliminated and ruled out, and it is unleavened bread which means that there is none of the ferment of the natural old creation life in the purpose of God. It has to be set aside. This is hallowing unto God; it is not only deliverance from the world, but it is deliverance from self.

Life in the Spirit

After that redemption from the world, and redemption unto God, you have life in the Spirit. They were all baptized, says the apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. The cloud is typical of the Holy Spirit coming to take possession of the Lord's people, and you have other types of the Spirit marking that they were called by redemption from the world, redemption unto God, into a life in the Spirit. That is, in other words, a life which is heavenly in all matters.

Now, it is not long after they are out, redeemed unto God, that the water question arises, and they come to Marah, and there it becomes a matter of life and death. The Lord, in that which is a figure of the Cross, the tree cast into the waters, saves their life by that water, and you have here a first suggestion that the life of this people separated unto God by the Cross is to be a life maintained by the Holy Spirit, lived by and in the Spirit. And then within three days the food question arises, and manna is given from heaven, again suggesting that the life of this people redeemed unto God is to be sustained from heaven, a heavenly provision for their life here. That is life in the Spirit. This is heavenly in its basis; it is heavenly in its maintenance. Presently again the water question will arise in a new connection, but once more it will be by the Cross that their life is brought into fulness in the Spirit.

Now you see at the beginning you have the stand that it is to be life by the Spirit. Presently the smitten rock will carry that truth further. It is the Cross which is always basic to the Holy Spirit's life, but by the smitten rock there will be a springing well, and that carries you over to John 4: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto life eternal." So that when Moses smote the rock and the waters gushed forth, then Israel sang. It was the song of the well: "Spring up O well!" Now it is not only told us in the first place that our life has to be a life by the

Spirit, but it has to be by the Holy Spirit within as a well springing up. That is the fulness of the Spirit within.

Then immediately after that Amalek comes out against Israel, and we are made to know that not only is our life to be by the Spirit, and our life to be sustained from heaven, and our life to be the fulness of the Spirit, but our warfare is to be heavenly warfare; for Moses with his hands lifted up to heaven, governs the warfare from the hilltop. And our warfare is to be sustained and carried through victoriously as out from heaven.

Here is the church in type *out* as a heavenly people, with every resource from heaven, completely separate from this world. And we can never come into God's thoughts and intentions until we have recognised that in the first place we are absolutely out from the world and in the second place that we are wholly living a life *in* the Spirit. These two things are essential to all God's intention for believers, and not for some believers, but for all. This is not teaching for some people who are going to have what is called "the higher life". This is not just holiness teaching for a group. This is God's thought for all His people, and to fail of this thought is to fail of God's intention in our very salvation. Our salvation is *unto* this. We are redeemed *unto* this. You know how often in the New Testament Israel's failure in the wilderness is taken as a warning to all believers that, having been redeemed and called out and having tasted of a life in the Spirit, they may yet miss all that God intended in their salvation and perish in the wilderness, failing to enter into the fulness of promise and intention.

Revelation

The next thing in this life of the Spirit is revelation. They come to the Mount and there they have heavenly revelation: first a revelation of God and then a revelation of themselves (and in the presence of the revelation they cry out in terror) and then a revelation of Christ, for the pattern is given of the tabernacle and all that has to do with it. And the life of the Lord's people is to be a life of heavenly revelation; that is, the eyes of our hearts being enlightened that we may know by a spirit of revelation the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward; and there is given the great heavenly revelation of these two things with which we commenced, concerning His Son and concerning the church and its calling from on high; a life of revelation.

Every child of God, in the intention and will of God, is to have the Holy Spirit within as the Spirit of revelation, so that they do not depend upon sermons and discourses and external things. The Holy Spirit in them is teaching, is revealing. That is for us all. "The anointing which you have received abides in you, and ye have no need that any one teach you, for ye yourselves know". It is the inward revelation of God's eternal thoughts and counsels in Christ concerning the church which is to be the life of the Lord's people in the Spirit.

Vocation

Then comes the next thing, that is, the vocation of the Lord's people. Note the steps: redemption from the world and the kingdom of Satan; redemption unto God, hallowed, as unleavened bread; life in the Spirit in every way unto Him; revelation of the calling; the vocation, a kingdom and priests.

The whole church is called into priestly position and priestly ministry unto God. The church is called to embody the testimony of redemption, all that redemption means from the power of Satan right unto the consummation of God's full purpose. That is redemption, and that is priestly ministry.

Now, here you come into the other side of the book. The first half of the book is what the Lord is for His people. The second half of the book is what His people are for Him. So you find that just about this point where you are passing from the one to the other, there is introduced that beautiful type of the Hebrew slave. He has served his six years. At the commencement of the seventh year he has the right to go free, to be set at liberty, but here is a Hebrew slave who says, "I love my master, and I will not go out free". The master takes him to the door and bores his ear with an awl, and he becomes his slave for ever, but he is no longer the slave of law and compulsion, he is now the slave of love. It is no longer what he has to do because his master bought him. It is now what he is devoted to; that is, he is devoted to his master.

And so Israel has been redeemed, but up to a point Israel were the Lord's people, serving the Lord, but with not much heart in it. They were recognising that the Lord was the Lord, and the Lord had delivered them, but you find the going pretty stiff and there is a good deal of murmuring about it. The second half of the book comes in with what the Lord's people are intended to be to Him. At that point you have the Hebrew servant, who says, "I have served my master in law; I was under obligation, but I love my master, and from now onward my service is going to be the service of my heart. What is in view now is my master's pleasure, not my duty to my master". So the Lord intends it. He says, "I have been faithful to you, and I have bought you, I have redeemed you, you are Mine, but I do not want you just on a basis of obligation, just on a basis of what you must do, that you are a Christian and, of course, as a Christian you must do this and you must do that, and you must not do this and you must not do that; governed all the time by 'Thou shalt', and 'Thou shalt not', with not much joy and pleasure in it. My thought," says the Lord in effect, "is that you shall recognise that I have interests, and that your heart shall be bound up with My interests, and you shall leave the ground of your own interests and come onto the ground of My interests, and be wholly abandoned from your heart to My interests." That is the Hebrew slave, who says, "I love! I will not - I can, but I will not go out; I am for ever abandoned to the interests of my Master".

So vocation comes in at that point, or very soon after, with what the Lord's people are to be, "the riches of His inheritance in the saints", not what we could get by being a Christian, but what the *Lord* gets in His saints. That becomes the dominating thing.

It is a heavenly vocation now, but only really to be prepared for that vocation now. As Paul says, "In the ages to come the shining forth of His manifold wisdom". A great vocation now, but a greater in the ages to come. Unto that we are called, and the apostle Paul is the great example of one of the Hebrew slaves, abandoned to His Lord in love for the interests and purposes of His Lord: "This one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind... I press toward the mark... Brethren, I count not myself yet to have attained... That I may gain Christ and be found in Him... That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death...". Here is a man who is abandoned to the Lord and to all the Lord's interests and all the Lord's thoughts.

When the Lord has got people on the ground of the Hebrew slave then they enter into their real vocation. Of course, in Israel's case He did not get that generation there, but He is saying what His thought is. He is showing the ground upon which He can realise His ends, and the ground upon which alone He can reach His ends: the ground of utter abandonment to Himself. And although that generation failed Him, yet His thought remains and is carried over to us. We see what that thought is, and when He gets a people there, then the revelation of the union between Christ and His church as a priestly company is shown its real vocation. That comes in with the tabernacle, for the tabernacle is one comprehensive setting forth in type of the union between Christ and His own in this great priestly ministry at the heart of the universe, so that all nations are affected one way or

the other by that testimony. When that comes in, God begins at the centre of things in the most holy place.

The most holy place speaks of three things mainly:

1. It is the centre of God's universe, where God is.
2. There is fellowship with God through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus: "I will commune with thee above the mercy seat between the cherubim." And concerning that most holy place the apostle says, "Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace". It is fellowship in virtue of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus right at the heart of God's universe with Himself.
3. Life completely governed from that centre where God is, "I will speak to thee of all things which I will give by commandment to the children of Israel."

The whole life of the Lord's people is to be governed, shaped, directed, and controlled right from the heart of things where God is Himself. It is a place where man has to be silent, and God only speaks. Man must not bring his judgements, thoughts, ideas or feelings about things; he has to be silent before God and listen. The most holy place is, therefore, the place where all flesh is silent, where all man's activities are at an end, and where God, and God only, speaks. Only so can the church fulfil its vocation, not by its counsellings, discussions, and plans, or any kind of activity of man. It has got to come out from God Himself by the Holy Spirit. If God's full ends are to be reached, God's full mind is to be expressed, there has to be a silence before the Lord and a knowing what the Lord says about things. That is the most holy place, "My soul, be thou silent unto God" (Psa. 62:5, R.V.M).

The holy place is the immediate result, in an active way, of the most holy place. Now we are moving out to daily life and daily ministry as priests unto God, and coming out of the most holy place where all is of God. In communion and government, we come into the activities of daily life spiritually. And the first thing mentioned is the table of shewbread, which speaks of the strength of Christ as having died to sin. Twelve unleavened loaves are on that table. Christ has died to sin, to self representatively, and Israel in the number twelve, the twelve tribes, is represented there as a people which has died in Christ to the self-life, and out of that death union with Christ to the self-life there is the strength of Christ in life. There is the strength of Christ having died to sin, no leaven being there.

Then the next thing is the golden lampstand which is testimony in the Holy Spirit and the power of Christ's resurrection. It is all almond blossoms which make up that lampstand, and the almond blossom in Scripture is always a type of resurrection. And the oil in the lamp is the Holy Spirit. So it is the Holy Spirit in the power of resurrection constituting the testimony of the Lord's people. It is the testimony of Jesus.

Do we see now in this comprehensive way what God is after, as this is all transferred to us in a spiritual way? His purpose is that at the heart of His universe for all eternity there shall be a people in union with His Son, expressing His eternal thoughts, and fulfilling a great heavenly ministry; in the meantime learning Christ and learning what it is to live a heavenly life even here on earth by means of being sustained by heavenly resources, and walking and having their life in the Spirit.

May the Lord make that all livingly clear to us.